

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the central text.

GUZ 63 2 John

*Bible Commentary:
David Guzik TEV - LXIII*

David Guzik

David Guziks' Commentary On
63 2John
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

Greeting

2Jn 1:1 The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all those who have known the truth,

2Jn 1:2 because of the truth remaining among us, and will be with us forever.

2Jn 1:3 Grace, mercy, peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Walking in Truth and Love

2Jn 1:4 I rejoiced greatly because I found your children walking in truth, as we received command from the Father.

2Jn 1:5 And I now request you, lady, not writing as a new commandment, but one which we had from the beginning, that we should love one another.

2Jn 1:6 And this is love, that we should walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

2Jn 1:7 Because many deceivers went out into the world, those not confessing Jesus Christ to have come in the flesh, this is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2Jn 1:8 Watch yourselves, that we may not lose the things we worked out, but that we may receive a full reward.

2Jn 1:9 Everyone transgressing and not abiding in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. The one abiding in the doctrine of Christ, this one has the Father and the Son.

2Jn 1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bear this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, and do not speak a greeting to him.

2Jn 1:11 For the one speaking a greeting shares in his evil works.

Final Greetings

2Jn 1:12 Having many things to write to you, I do not intend to speak by means of paper and ink, but I am hoping to come to you, and to speak mouth to mouth, that our joy may be full.

2Jn 1:13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

2 John 1:1-13

2 John - Walking In the Truth

"This epistle is more remarkable for the spirit of Christian love which it breathes than for anything else. It contains scarcely anything that is not found in the preceding; and out of the thirteen verses there are at least eight which are found, either in so many words or in sentiment, precisely the same with those of the first epistle." (Adam Clarke)

A. Greeting.

1. (1-2) To ***the elect lady and her children.***

THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.

a. **The Elder:** The writer of this book identifies himself as **the Elder**. Presumably, his first readers knew exactly who he was, and from the earliest times, Christians have understood this was the Apostle John writing.

i. "John the apostle, who was now a very old man, generally supposed to be about ninety, and therefore uses the term presbyter or elder, not as the name of an *office*, but as designating his advanced age. He is allowed to have been the oldest of all the apostles, and to have been the only one who died a natural death." (Clarke)

b. **To the elect lady and her children:** Perhaps this was an individual Christian woman John wanted to warn and encourage by this letter. Or, the term might be a symbolic way of addressing this particular congregation.

i. "The phrase is, however, more likely to be a personification than a person - not the church at large but some local church over which the elder's jurisdiction was recognized, *her children* being the church's individual members." (Stott)

ii. "This appears to have been some noted person, whom both her singular piety, and rank in the world, made eminent, and capable of having great influence for the support of the Christian interest." (Poole)

iii. John probably did not name himself, **the elect lady** or **her children** by name because this was written during a time of persecution. Perhaps John didn't want to implicate anyone by name in a written letter. If the letter was intercepted and the authorities knew who it was written to by name, it might mean death for those persons.

c. **Whom I love in truth, and not only I:** Whomever **the elect lady** was, she was loved by all who **have known the truth**. If we know and love the truth, we will love those who also know and love the truth - **the truth which abides in us** also lives in others who know the truth.

i. We see John quite focused on the idea of truth, as he was in all of his writings. He used the word *truth* some thirty-seven times in his New Testament writings.

ii. This shows that what binds Christians together is not social compatibility or political compatibility or class compatibility. What binds us together is a common **truth**. This is why truth is important to Christians.

d. **Will be with us forever**: The truth does not change. The truth will be true **forever**, and we will have the truth forever in eternity. Many people today think that the truth changes from age to age and from generation to generation, but the Bible knows that the truth **will be with us forever**.

2. (3) John's salutation to his readers.

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

a. **Grace, mercy, and peace**: John presents a slightly expanded version of the standard greeting in New Testament letters. He didn't just wish these for his readers; he confidently bestowed them by saying they **will be with you from God the Father**.

b. **In truth and love**: John can hardly write a verse without mentioning these two of his favorite topics. The **grace, mercy, and peace** God has for us are all given **in truth and love**. Apart from God's **truth and love**, we can never really have **grace, mercy, and peace**.

i. "What deep, sweet rhythm of meaning there is in the first three verses of this letter! One reads them over and over again. Oh, that the grace, mercy, and peace, may be with us, from God the Father, and

from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and in love." (Meyer)

c. **The Son of the Father:** "The apostle still keeps in view the *miraculous conception* of Christ; a thing which the *Gnostics* absolutely denied; a doctrine which is at the ground work of our salvation."

B. How to walk.

1. (4) *John's joy to find they are **walking in truth**.*

I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

a. **I rejoiced greatly:** This is a pastor's heart - to know that his people are **walking in truth**. While **truth** is not the *only* concern of a pastor, it is a great concern; and it is a great comfort for a pastor to see those he loves and cares for **walking in truth**.

i. "The *children* mentioned here may either be *her own children*, or those *members of the Church* which were under her care, or some of *both*." (Clarke)

b. **I have found some of your children walking in truth:** John rejoiced because when God's people are **walking in truth**, they also abide in God. The same idea is expressed in 1Jn 2:24 : *Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.* Truth is not only important for its own sake, but also our **walking in truth** shows we are walking with the Lord.

i. Trapp on the idea of **walking in the truth**: "Not taking a step or two, not breaking or leaping over the hedge to avoid a piece of foul way, but persisting in a Christian course, not starting aside to the right hand or the left."

2. (5) *The commandment to love one another.*

And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

a. **I plead with you, lady:** John was not too proud to beg on such an important matter - not when it came to something as vital in the Christian life as the **commandment** that we must **love one another**.

b. **Not as though I wrote a new commandment:** John knew this was nothing new to his readers (he repeated the theme all through 1 John and his gospel). Yet because it was so essential, it had to be repeated and used as a reminder.

c. **That we love one another:** The integrity of our Christian life can be measured by our love for one another (as in Joh 13:35 and 1Jn 4:20-21).

3. (6) *Showing the love of God.*

This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

a. **This is love, that we walk according to His commandments:** If we love God, we will obey His commandments. We do this not because we think His commandments are heavy burdens, but because we see that they are best for us. They are guides and gifts to us from God.

b. **Walk according to His commandments:** Real love will walk this way. Perhaps John warned against those who thought the only important thing in the Christian life was a vague love that had no heart for obedience.

i. "Perhaps you fail to distinguish between love and the emotion of love. They are not the same. We may love without being directly conscious of love, or being able to estimate its strength and passion. Here is the solution to many of our questionings: They love who obey." (Meyer)

4. (7-9) *A warning against the presence and dangers of false teachers.*

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

a. **Many deceivers have gone out into the world:** John was aware false teachers were a danger to the church in his day.

i. "The immediate problem in [2 John] is that of traveling teachers or missionaries. According to Christian ethics all who thus traveled about were to be shown hospitality by Christians in the town to which they came." (Boice)

b. **This is a deceiver:** John mainly had in mind the danger in his own time, of those who thought that Jesus, being God, could have no *real* connection with the material world. They said that He only had an *apparent* connection with the material world.

i. To combat this, John made a plain declaration: we must **confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh**. This means Jesus came as a real man in His first

coming, but also means He will come as a human being – although glorified humanity, and that added to His eternal deity - a real flesh and blood Jesus will come again to the earth.

c. **This is a deceiver and an antichrist:** Against this false idea of Jesus, John insists those **who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh** are the deceivers and have the spirit of the **antichrist**.

i. John warned us against these antichrists in his first letter (1Jn 2:18-23; 1Jn 4:3). They are those who not only oppose Jesus, but also offer a substitute “Christ.”

ii. This spirit of antichrist will one day find its ultimate fulfillment in *the Antichrist*, who will lead humanity in an end-times rebellion against God.

d. **Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God:** There is nothing noble, sincere, courageous, or admirable in a *false* Jesus. To deny the Biblical Jesus is *always* to reject the Father and the Son both. John here draws a critical line of truth, over which it is heresy to *transgress*.

i. In our own day, we must deal with modern denials of the Biblical Jesus with the same passion John did in his day. Today, with our “scholarly” denials of Jesus and the historical record of the Gospels, it is more important than ever to know who the true Jesus is according to the Bible and to love and serve the true Jesus.

ii. “To say *no* to God’s way of revealing himself is to say *no* to God himself, for he will not let himself be known by men except on his own terms.” (Marshall)

e. **Transgresses:** The word *transgresses* has the idea of “going beyond a boundary.” We never go “beyond” the

teaching of Jesus, of who He is and what He has done for us. Anyone who thinks we have or should go beyond what the Bible plainly says about Jesus *transgresses*.

i. "There is a true progress in the Christian life, but it is progress based upon a deeper knowledge of the historical, biblical Christ. Progress on any other ground may be called progress, but it is a progress that leaves God behind and is, therefore, not progress at all." (Boice)

ii. "When the teaching of the Bible needs to be supplemented by some 'key' to the Bible or by some new revelation, it is a sure sign that 'advanced' doctrine is being put forth." (Marshall)

f. **Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for:** To depart from the true Jesus means you put yourself in jeopardy to lose the things the apostles and other faithful saints **worked for**. This shows us that it isn't enough for us to start out right, we must finish in faith to **receive a full reward**.

5. (10-11) *Instructions for dealing with the false teachers.*

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

a. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine:** If someone comes to us, denying the true doctrine of Jesus, and promoting a false doctrine of Jesus, John says we should give no hospitality, no aid, to the ones who promote their own false version of Jesus. To do so is to share **in his evil deeds**.

i. "The words mean, according to the eastern use of them, 'Have no religious connection with him, nor act towards him so as to induce others to believe you acknowledge him as a brother.' " (Clarke)

ii. "Suppose the visiting teacher claimed to be a Christian missionary or even a prophet but taught what was clearly false doctrine. Hospitality would demand that he be provided for, but to do so would seem to be participation in the spread of his false teachings. Should he be received or not?" (Boice)

b. **He who greets him:** John means **greet**s in a much more involved context than our own. In that culture, it meant to show hospitality and give aid. Yet, for the weak or unskilled believer, it is best if they do not even *greet* (in the sense of speaking to) those who promote a false Jesus (like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses).

i. These words sound severe, but John has not lost his love. We must consider these three points:

- John is not talking about *all* error, but only error which *masquerades* as true Christianity.
- John is not talking about all who *hold* the error which masquerades as true Christianity, but about those who *teach* those errors which masquerade as true Christianity.
- John is not talking about all *teachers* who err, but those who err in the most *fundamental* truths, and those who are active in spreading those fundamental errors.

ii. This does not mean that we should have nothing to do with those who are caught by the cults. As John indicates, we should make a distinction between those who *teach* these Christ-denying doctrines (those who **bring this doctrine**) and those who merely *believe* the doctrines without trying to spread them.

c. **Do not receive him into your house nor greet him:** This may also be translated *do not receive him into the house*. John may be referring most specifically to not

allowing these heretical teachers to come into **the house** where Christians meet together.

i. "Perhaps, therefore, it is not private hospitality which John is forbidding so much as an official welcome into the congregation, with the opportunity this would afford to the false teacher to propagate his errors." (Stott)

ii. "We see how such [false] teachers were treated in the apostolic Church. They held no communion with them; afforded them no support, as *teachers*; but *did not persecute* them." (Clarke)

d. **Shares in his evil deeds:** We are defined by what we *reject* as much as by what we *accept*. In this, some are so *open minded* that they are *empty headed*. It is wise to keep an open mind on many things; but one would never keep an open mind about which poisons a person might try. You may say *yes* to all the right things; but one must also say *no* to what is false and evil. We need to become good at rejecting what should be rejected.

i. "They were persons who claimed to be leaders; they were advanced thinkers, they were progressive. The Gnostic teachers of the time were claiming that while the gospel of the historic Jesus might be all very well for unenlightened people, they had a profounder knowledge. Such were to receive no hospitality." (Morgan)

ii. In the late 19th Century, the rise of theological liberalism brought forth generations of Christian pastors, leaders, and theologians who denied many of the fundamentals of Biblical Christianity. Though it was a broad and varied movement, at its root theological liberalism thought that Christianity had to

re-evaluate all its doctrines in the light of modern science, philosophy, and thinking. They rejected the idea that a doctrine was true simply because the Bible taught it; it also had to be proved true by reason and experience. They believed that the Bible was not an inspired message from a real God, but the work of men who were limited by the ignorance and superstitions of their time. For them, the Bible was not either inspired or supernatural. The importance of the Bible and its message was not in its literal or historical truth, but in its changing spiritual message.

C. Conclusion.

1. (12) *John anticipates a future visit.*

Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

a. **I hope to come to you and speak face to face:** We must generally sympathize with John's preference for personal, face to face communication rather than the writing of letters - though we are thankful for this letter.

2. (13) *Conclusion.*

The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

a. **The children of your elect sister:** Telling us that the *elect lady* (2Jn 1:1) has an **elect sister**, and that they both have **children** does little to identify with certainty who John is writing to. Perhaps all it tells us is that if John used the term *elect lady* as a symbol for the church, he used it rather loosely (saying that she has a sister and children). The most likely idea is that the *elect lady* (a particular church) had an **elect sister** – other "sister" churches from which John brings a greeting.

b. **The children of your elect sister:** This last reference to the **elect sister** and her **children** remind

us that though we must be on guard against false teachers, the true followers of Jesus are more than just our group. If we allow our desire to defend the truth to make us unloving and intolerant, Satan has won a great victory.